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Abstract

ROWANDUZ; A KURDISH ADMINISTRATIVE AND MERCANTILE CENTER

by William M. Masters

121 This study has two purposes, the first of which is
105 an analysis and interpretation of the culture of Rowanduz,
a Kurdish administrative and mercantile town of northern
Iraq. In carrying out this purpose, it is necessary to make
reference to wider cultural horizons in Iraq and the Middle
East. On the other hand, inasmuch as detailed, localized
treatments of the Kurds have not been previously attempted,
this study of Rowanduz is able to contribute to the
[101] ethnology of the Middle East. The Kurds are a Muslim people
[61] numbering several millions, who inhabit the mountainous
[131] region where the frontiers of Iraq, Iran, Russia, Syria,
and Turkey meet. The second purpose of this study is the
delineation of the impact of the modern state on the
structure of the society of the town and the district within
[114] which it lies. The materials were obtained from seven
weeks' intensive investigation in the summer of 1951.

An analysis and interpretation of the culture of
Rowanduz are presented in six areas of discussion: 1)
[128] the administrative center, 2) the mercantile center, 3)
house, dress, and diet, 4) the society, 5) the family,
[16] 6) religious life. The population of the town numbers
about 3000 and is basically made up of merchants,

[p. i(a)]

105 121 craftsmen, laborers, and servants. The town dominates a large district of agricultural villages both as a center of government administration and as one of commerce. Detailed descriptionsof the aspects of life pertinent to the arena of discussin are given.

The most imporant focus of investigation, connected with the second objec of the study, is found to be the society of the town. Formerly, Kurdish society, a composite of both tribal and fedal systems, was "primitive" or "pseudo-primitive" in character. It consisted of a mass of commoners, tenants or tribesmen, ruled by a hereditary aristocracy, and advancement from the first class to the second was impossible. The incursion of the modern state has added a new class to this society, a government elite, and offers the possibility of attaining the highest social rank through education to the commoners of the older systems

The conclusions implement the two purposes of the study. 1) Kurdish culture, as represented in Rowandus, is discovered to be strongly regulated by Islam and to have many general similarities to that of Islamic peoples elsewhere, in spite of numerous peculiarities. 2) The impact of the modern state is changing the structure of Kurdish society and threaten to eliminate the native aristocracy by replacing it with the government elite. The Kurdish chieftains have reacted to this with a series of revolts, while many of the commoners are being absorbed into the new order, particularly in towns like Rowandus. Popular understanding of the reaction, as well as of the transformat

of the commoners into a body of citizenry, is obscured 105
by a nationalistic ideology directed against the rulers 121
(who belong to other ethnic groups) of the Kurds. A
movement such as this has important relevance to the
contemporary Middle East at large.

[p. i(c)]

second was the diversion of some of the chieftains at the 579 expense of commercial travelers who, of course, had reason to complain of the tolls exacted from them. It is ridiculous, however, to suppose that the Kurds as a body are a race of murderers and thieves.

An investigation of Kurdish life, the first object of 121 this study, has value, not simply because the people have so often been maligned, but for the reason that the ethnology of the Middle East, a field which has only recently begun to receive adequate attention must be built up from accurate, localized descriptions. If broader analyses of contemporary Islamic culture are to be undertaken, as well as historical studies, they demand a body of data which admits of verification, the work of observers whose motives are scientific, rather than the loose aggregation of anecdotes and generalizations one has to deal with at present. One may profitably study Kurdish life, because it has been almost untouched as far as primary observation is concerned and, as the culture of a non-Arab people whose language and background is Indo-European, an inquiry into the effect of Islam in modifying its formation would not be without reward. One may properly seek to present those elements which may be proven to be unique with the Kurds and those others which may be attributed to the influence of Islam and other peoples. It 114 is convenient here to mention the recent monograph of E. R. Leach, *Social and Economic Organization of the Rowanduz Kurds*, which, with the exception of some studies made many years

age and published in Russian by V. F. Minorsky, unavailable 114
to the investigator, seems to be the first attempt to deal in systematic fashion with the people themselves.[1] Leach's study, however, is brief and neglects a number of aspects of life, for example, the ceremonies surrounding birth, circumcision, marriage, and death, of which treatment would be desirable. Secondly, the "Rowanduz area" in Leach's work includes a wide region of investigation ranging from Erbil to the Iranian frontier and, with a few exceptions, his remarks cannot be referred to a particular village or town. Lastly, he was primarily concerned with the agricultural villages and has little to say about the town of Rowanduz itself.

In addition to a primary, comprehensive description 121
of Kurdish life, a second problem, of importance to the ethnology of the Middle East as a whole, is almost forced
on one. The first facet of this is the question of Kurdish 121 668
nationalism, the repercussions of which have recently directed a great deal of popular attention to this group. Nationalism, which requires no new definition here, is a variant of ethnocentrism. In its best known contemporary forms it evolved in Europe during the last two centuries. The nation, in such thinking, is differentiated from others by criteria, often highly fictional, of race or culture. The goal of nationalism is the realization of an autonomous state. In this it achieves a political aim, but its real

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[1] Leach, 1940.

determinants are usually economic, the reaction against 121 668
exploitation by those considered to be aliens. Occasionally it conceals the desire to exploit others, as exemplified in the recent cases of "Germans" of Danzig or the Sudetenland. The trappings of European nationalism are singularly uniform. The nationalists find for their group a glorious historical past and a wealth of intellectual and artistic achievements. It is interesting to consider how many national "epic poems" and folk heroes have come to light in Europe in the last century. Nationalism of this type has characteristically been developed among the educated upper and middle classes from whom it descended to the mass of the people. In this restricted form, nationalism as an ideology has spread over much of the civilized world from Europe, and found recruits in the Middle East among the subjects of the Ottoman Empire, such as the Albanians,
Armenians, and Greeks. With those dissatisfied with 668
Turkish domination and attracted by the extravagant new philosophy were the Kurds.

> In the autumn of 1908, a Kurdish club was established in Constantinople . . . with the object of studying the essential principles which must govern the organisation of the nation and the homeland. They published a newspaper . . . In the first few numbers of the journal, leaders . . . laid great emphasis on 'acquiring and organising a good language,' as a key to learning and civilisation. Details were published showing the wealth of Kurdish folklore and unwritten literature . . . it was suggested that a national Kurdish force should be raised on the basis of tribal regiments . . . Similar Kurdish Clubs were established also at Baghdad, Mosul and Diarbekr to promote the same ideas and methods . . . This common passion for education formed a close bond between the

> students who met each other not only at school and public meetings, but also at social gatherings where they could talk and exchange their views.[1] 668

Kurdish nationalism in the European sense thus had its first protagonists among the educated Kurdish officials, officers, professional men, and students of the Ottoman Empire, not the chieftains and the people themselves.

121 ● 668 Nationalism, which has an independent state as its goal, is something quite different from the transition of primitive into civilized society. It is held that the basis of membership in a primitive society is one of kinship while that of civilized is one of territorial distinctions and property relations. There is thus a fundamental difference between the two in structure. This thesis, one of the central problems of ethnological theory, was well outlined by Maine:

> The history of political ideas begins, in fact, with the assumption that kinship in blood is the sole possible ground of community in political functions nor is there any of those subversions of feeling which we term emphatically revolutions so startling and so complete as the change which is accomplished when some other principle—such as that, for instance of local contiguity—establishes itself for the first time as the basis for common political action.[2]

Maine was joined by other nineteenth century anthropologists and writers in asserting the change from primitive to civilized society was qualitative. Morgan, for example, wrote:

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[1] Safrastian, 1948, pp. 70-71.

[2] Maine, 1888, p. 124.

> It may be here premised that all forms of government are reducible to two general plans, using the word plan in its scientific sense. In their bases the two are fundamentally distinct. The first, in order of time, is founded upon persons, and upon relations purely personal, and may be distinguished as a society (societas) . . . The second is founded upon territory and upon property, and may be distinguished as a state (civitas). The township, or ward, circumscribed by metes and bounds, with the property it contains, is the basis or unit of the latter, and political society is the result. Political society is organized upon territorial areas, and deals with property as well as with persons through territorial relations.[1]

More recently this point of view was challenged by Lowie, among others, who claimed the difference was merely quantitative:

> The traditional distinction established by Maine and Morgan retains its validity in so far as conceptually a union of neighbors is different from a union of kinsmen. It must even be conceded that the blood tie is frequently the overshadowing element in governmental activities of primitive peoples. Yet, though it often dwarfs the territorial factor, it never succeeds in eliminating it . . . The basic problem of the state is thus not that of explaining the somersault by which ancient peoples achieved the step from a government by personal relations to one of territorial contiguity only. The question is rather to show what processes strengthened the local tie which must be recognized as not less ancient than the rival principle.[2]

Without arguing the question, in which the advantage seems to this writer to lie with Maine and his successors, the problem will be seen to have relevance to the recent history of the Kurds in Iraq. Civilized society is represented in their situation by the modern state, the monarchy of Iraq,

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[1] Morgan, 1909, p. 6.

[2] Lowie, 1927, pp. 72-73.

and it is important not to confuse the ideal of the intel- 121
lectual nationalists, a free Kurdish commonwealth, with that 668
which the chieftains and their people are now striving to preserve, a society quite unlike the state.

The Kurds, occupying a mountainous terrain, were but 648
superficially governed by the Iranian and Ottoman govern-
ments. Inasmuch as the roads were poor or the country [491]
impossible for artillery, the Kurds, a well-armed people, were usually the military equals of their governors. The control of the Iranians and Turks was thus largely confined to the maintenance of police posts and army installations and the attempt, often in vain, to maintain public order and collect a few taxes. Helmut von Moltke, writing in 1838, notes:

> It is a well-known fact that the Ottoman empire comprises vast regions in which the Porte exercises no real authority. It is certain that the Padishah (the Turkish Sultan) has to reconquer widespread regions within the territory of his own state. To this category belong the highlands (of Kurdistan) between the Tigris and the Persian frontier.[1]

In recent decades, however, the Kurds, notably in Iraq and 177
Turkey, have been subjected to the full impact of the modern 619
state and some remarkable changes, comparable to similar developments elsewhere in the Middle East, are beginning to take place, challenging the whole structure of their society. This last, as will be seen, is one which is at once tribal and feudal, formerly directed by a landed aristocracy. A

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[1] Quoted in Safrastian, 1948, p. 50.

characteristic of it was its extreme decentralization. The 177
Kurdish tenant or tribesman has now suddenly discovered himself 619
to be a citizen, and the Kurdish chieftain to be without
his former economic or political power. A new class, that
of officials and officers, has been introduced with an
unfamiliar system of society, and the result has not been
without conflict. The fact that the reaction has been linked
with European nationalism makes it the more interesting.
The second object of this study is the delineation of this 121
collision, and a consideration of the alterations in Kurdish 177
life since Ottoman times. The recognition that nationalism, 668
commonly considered in the Middle East as a European ideology
in new dress, may be paired in some instances with economic
and social upheavals of a different order is a matter of
great importance in the analysis of the area.

The Kurdish population of Iraq has been estimated at 161
about 400,000, although figures vary considerably, and 191
occupies the mountainous areas north of Mosul, northeast of
Erbil, and east of Kirkuk. In many instances their villages
have spilled out on the flat expanses of Upper Mesopotamia.
A small portion of this populace is nomadic, wintering [221]
their flocks in the same plains area, and seeking the
pastures of the uplands in the summer. Kurdish Iraq provides 153
a striking contrast to the sun-baked flats and
deserts of the central and southern provinces. The terrain
is rugged, with peaks reaching 8000 feet above sea level,
and is characterized by precipitous heights, deep gorges,

route, a path unsuitable for vehicles, but still used by 361
the villagers, and several tracks lead off to the villages [487]
at its rear. Rowandus proved itself advantageous for an 121
initial investigation of Kurdish culture, for it has a basic 369
population of merchants and landowners whose life is considerably
richer and more complex than that of the poor
farmers and shepherds. To obtain the most complete portrayal,
of course, a desirable supplement should be obtained from
the villagers and the nomads in future work. In relation 121
to the second problem, however, the impact of the state on 177
Kurdish society, Rowandus was ideal, because it was in the
town that the new class of society, that of the government
officials and officers, had replaced the few Ottoman
officials and the first signs of change could be observed.
The first object of this study, then, is the analysis of
Rowandus as an administrative and mercantile center and
Kurdish life as it is to be observed there. The second
object is the determination of the way in which the imposition
of a new order of society has affected the Kurds.

CHAPTER II

THE ADMINISTRATIVE CENTER

To give a description of Rowanduz, its administrative 121 and economic importance, as well as its social and religious 361 life, demands a certain excursus above and beyond the actual physical limits of the town. To understand the role of the town, not only as a rural center, but in broader cultural horizons, one must have some understanding of the areas within which it lies. It is not intended to enter into an exhaustive discussion of either regional cultures or of a civilization, for that presupposes a much more extended survey than either the basis or the framework of this study can support, but rather to indicate the proper perspective in which the town must be viewed. The most convenient beginning to this task is not to be found in an economic or social background, but in the government, for in proceeding from its delineation, in many cases generalized with respect to district and to nation, an effective appreciation of later discussion can be formed.

Thus a clearer definition of the position of Rowanduz as an administrative center requires in some wise an appreciation of the constitution of Iraq itself, on whose northeastern border lies the district dominated by the town. A segment 175 of the old Ottoman Empire, the territory of modern Iraq was 648

Attention might be directed to the land of Rowanduz itself. Before the Russians burned the old town, the present site above the valley was occupied by only a few Ottoman buildings, summer residences, and gardens. Most of the choicest lands in the new town are owned by Lali Khan and Ra'uf Effendi whose families had titles from Ottoman times. In the lower priced lands of the modern upper town there is a variety of tenure, government (*amiriya*), private (*tapu*), and religious endowment (*waqf*), but the two most important owners are those mentioned here. 823 341 [707]

It is somewhat unfortunate, in treating the economics of the Rowanduz district and the position of its principal town within such a system, to be unable to present an exact quantitative analysis. In the absence of government statistics, and faced with the widespread distrust of the populace toward inquiries which might bear some relation to taxation, one must be satisfied with a generalized description of a primary nature. This need not be regarded as a deficit, inasmuch as the more important conclusions of this study have reference to social structure, an emphasis, however, which in no wise implies that the economic background is not critically germane to the discussion. It is therefore possible, in closing this section, to re-emphasize certain generalities which statistical information would not seem likely to modify in any serious fashion. [2] 186 [123 651]

The size and importance of any town can be governed by a number of things, environmental, economic, social, or religous. [2]

CHAPTER VI

THE FAMILY

In treating the families of Rowanduz, it is unnecessary to describe in detail those of the official class, for the officials and officers are of diverse ethnic origins, Arab, Kurd, and Turk, and they are often unmarried or unaccompanied by their wives. Even when settled temporarily in the town with a spouse, they represent only a part the larger social units to which they belong elsewhere in Iraq. None of the officials and officers has yet [illegible] a permanent [illegible]. It is thus possible, making references to the officials whenever necessary, to direct attention to the Kurdish populace, aristocrats and commoners. It has been chosen to treat the family of a wealthy merchant as typical, and to draw comparisons with others from this central treatment. 121 563 567

It is important at the outset to define what is understood by the Kurdish "family." For the townspeople, the term most regularly used is mal, "house," (perhaps from arabic, mal, "property"). The word is alternately used for the physical structure itself or for the group of kindred to be found in such a dwelling. Postmarital residence is normally patrilocal, the groom taking his bride to his father's house or to a new dwelling furnished 592 593 591 as marriage, have their focus in that place, rather than in the town. It is interesting that this class, which regards itself as "modern" and "progressive," should reinforce things held to be reactionary by some of the townspeople, specifically the strict segregation of women. Even a radically-minded official would not dare to let his wife have the same freedom in the town she can enjoy in Baghdad or some other city. The townspeople often commented on the peculiar behavior of the medical officer who kept his wife in the greatest seclusion, although those who had caught a glimpse of her said she was no particular beauty. This segregation on the part of the officials and officers has an unfortunate effect on the townspeople of greater wealth who do the same to their own wives and daughters where otherwise they might have permitted them greater liberty. 585 593 [604]

The primary task of this section has been to present an analysis of the family life of the average townsman, and it is important to notice that the family does not seem to constitute an important area of change in the transformation of the culture. Ma'af Effendi, like so many elders, remarked that the society of the town had changed for the worse from Ottoman days, but, on going over all of the affairs of the family, he was only able to conclude that "youth had greater respect for age" fifty years ago. In spite of this observation, the family in Rowanduz is still a distinctly patriarchal organization and its members are 591 [n.i] [178] [586] the son-in-law of the Prophet and his descendants. Something of the distinctive aversion of the Sunnite Kurd for his eastern neighbor has already been seen, although phrased as much in ethnic as in religious terms. Of the four Medieval Sunnite schools of religious law, Hanifite, Malikite, Shafi'ite, and Hanbalite, the Kurds nominally belong to that founded by Abu Hanifa (d. 767), originally a following noted for its liberal tendencies and the admission of logic in formulating legislation, now, however, crystallized into a rite not differing too greatly from its surviving fellows. 795

Beyond this brief classification, it is of no purpose here to enter into an extended discussion of the theological content of Islam insofar as it does not pertain to daily life, for, not only are these matters exhaustively and competently treated elsewhere, they are largely of no moment to the townsman or chieftain. The investigator was often told, on inquiring into some matter of religion, that "you must ask the *mulla* these questions," just as many Christians refer weightier queries to their priest or minister. In noting the Shiite insistence that the successors of the Prophet be of his own blood, the *sayyid* ("lord") or descendant of the Tribe of Muhammad might be mentioned. Many persons in the Rowanduz district, as well as several in the town itself, lay claim to this distinction, which carries with it the prerogative of wearing a green turban and the enjoyment, if they choose to exploit it, of a reputation for sanctity. This honored 779 781 778 584 782 [782]

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSIONS

This study has had two objects, the first of which has been to present a primary description of Kurdish life as observed in an administrative and mercantile center. (2) This attempt has not been without its limitations, indicated from time to time, the chief of which is the inaccessibility of the quantitative data desirable in the definitive analysis of a people's life. Similarly, the complete account of al- [illegible] conventions, and one, in the town itself, was forced to limit the scope of his inquiries and in this presentation to omit or condense material which might overburden the discussion. Some subjects, such as Islamic law or the details of government administration, although they are an integral part of the life of the town, may properly be found elsewhere, and others, such as Kurdish folklore or music, present objects of study in themselves. Many topics, then, have not been exhausted, and further investigation, particularly among the villages, would provide welcome amplification. Nevertheless, it is felt that the first aim has been achieved, an accurate, comprehensive description of the culture of a particular Kurdish town, which is not too encyclopedic to prevent its appreciation by anyone other than the specialist and which can provide the material for broader studies of the economics, society, or religion of the Middle East. The value of investigations undertaken in a particular town or locale is obvious. Too often the student 121 ● of the ethnology of the Middle East is forced to glean his information from the chance remarks and anecdotes of administrators, missionaries, and travelers. If such a writer happens to comment on the wedding customs of one village, and, several pages later, outlines the funeral rites of another, one cannot legitimately infer that marriage and burial are the same in both villages. A body of this type of material exists for the Kurds themselves, but it has not been thought necessary to make reference to it. One cannot take some engineer or missionary to task for an observation, seemingly incorrect, which cannot be identified with reference to a definite locale, nor does there appear to be much value in criticizing their conclusion. The dangers of generalization are marked, for example, Driver, who writes: 114

> Kurdish women are comparatively free to come and go as they like; they are wooed and won by open courtship, for in almost all tribes they are unveiled.[1] [562]

This statement, as has been shown for Rowanduz, is not valid. It has also been felt that a detailed comparison of life in Rowanduz with that of other groups in the Middle East would be worth little, for the student has at his disposal comprehensive, localized treatments only of the Arab Bedouin, the Egyptian peasantry, and certain peoples of North Africa.

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[1] Driver, 1921, p. 568.

The most productive comparisons would be with the Turks or the Persians, but, unfortunately, no such monographs are as yet available. To utilize the scanty and widely scattered materials on Turkish or Persian life would be at best haphazard. This study of Rowanduz, with certain exceptions, stands by itself, in the belief that it will afford accurate data for the comparative treatments of the future. 114 121

Something of the content of Kurdish life, as observed in Rowanduz, has been presented. It has been seen that the town dominates, partly in an administrative and partly in a commercial way, a large agricultural district. The bulk of the townspeople are merchants, craftsmen, and servants who depend for their livelihood on commerce with the villagers and the patronage of government personnel. The basis of the town's importance is both economic and political. Life within the household, the structure of society, and religion have been treated. What is perhaps of great importance is the ample demonstration that the Kurds are not savages devoid of culture, that they are not all "robbers" and need not "kill six or seven men" in order to be respected. With the exception of revolts and blood feuds, the district is relatively peaceful and normally one is rarely in danger of molestation. The old brigandage, carried on largely by the chieftains as a lucrative diversion, was directed against commercial travelers who could protect themselves from it by the simple expedient of making "gifts" in advance. A district population of some fifty thousand 115 [181] 185 579 626

could scarcely support itself by robbery alone. It is 185 579
interesting that the Arab Bedouins, among whom the vendetta 625
and brigandage are just as well marked, are not often accused
of being a race of savages and criminals. The Bedouin, 171
unlike the Kurd, has been romanticized rather than con- 183
demned by those who have had little experience with him.
Kurdish life, to be sure, is not distinguished by its
intellectual or artistic achievements, but, by the same
token, neither is that of Medieval Scotland, Sicily, or
Albania, mountainous regions inhabited by peoples of a
similar temperament. The most interesting characteristic
of Kurdish culture is the way in which it has been moulded
by Islam, and, in this, it exhibits similarities to that of
Islamic peoples everywhere. It is mute testimony to the
character of Islam and to the force of its protagonists in
the Kurdish mountains that the peculiarities which may
have obtained in pagan Kurdish society or religion have
been so thoroughly submerged into a standard pattern. Aside
from minor deviations, one is able to discover little which
strikes him as strange or anomalous.

The second object of this study has been the delinea- 121
tion of the impact of the modern state on Kurdish life, and
it is necessary to discuss the conclusions reached in this
respect in much greater detail than in the first. The (4)
Kurds have been subjected, particularly since the Arab
conquests, to rulers of one sort or another, the last of
whom were the Ottoman Turks, but this control was, for the
most part, superficial. Ottoman administration in Kurdistan

was in reality that of a tribute empire, concerned with the collection of taxes and recruits. Even in these two last tasks there was a contest, often in good humor, between the governors and the governed, and the victories were divided. As long as money and men were in reasonably good evidence, the Turks left the Kurds to their own devices. They handed down justice of a sort, but most quarrels never reached their courts. They were not particularly concerned with homicide, insofar as the murdered party was not a Turk, and, above all, they did not tamper with the economic structure of society. The bulk of the taxes were collected, in the best way possible, from the chieftains and landowners, never from the farmers and shepherds. The Kurds regarded these taxes, when they were forced to pay them, as a sort of levy to some superior chieftain. Matters of education or public health received little attention. This does not mean that in certain other areas of the Ottoman Empire there was not a complex bureaucratic government, but in Kurdistan it may be summed up as little more than desultory control. The gentle character of this administration, compared with that of today, is indicated by the fact that many Kurds look back with nostalgia to the "freedom" of Ottoman times. 619 [691] [651] [658] [744]

In ethnological theory the significant difference between primitive and civilized society is held to have its basis in economics. Membership in a primitive society is defined in terms of kinship relation, usually by "blood," 121 619

and larger confederations of kinship groups are articulated 619
with a similar phraseology. The Kurdish tribe, which has [121]
not been extensively discussed, represents in large part
such a unit. The lands of the tribe, agricultural or [423]
pastoral, are the property of kinship groups, extended
patrilineal families, as are the flocks and herds, and an
individual cannot alienate them in quantity without diffi-
culty. Chieftainship is hereditary, commonly with the demo- [622]
cratic approval of the men of the tribe. Some chieftains
are undistinguished from their tribesmen save in the size
of their families' buildings, and others receive a customary
share of the annual produce. The Kurdish tribe, then, is
traditionally an alliance of extended patrilineal families,
sometimes with the fiction of a common ancestor, and member-
ship in the tribe depends on membership in the family, a
matter of "blood" descent. Tribal life is directed by the [628]
chieftain, and the murder of a member or the theft of
property by an outsider is never permitted to go unavenged.

Feudalism, an arrangement different than that of the 174
tribe, requires no redefinition here. It is a personal 423
exchange of duties between landlord and tenant, and is not 566
represented in the Rowanduz district by the nomads whose
society is exclusively tribal. It seems to have arisen in
two ways, in the first of which the chieftains of nomadic
groups took agricultural villages under their protection.
One might remark again that the nomad, because of his
mobility and firepower, has a military advantage over the
villager. In the second, some powerful families, by the

with respect to rulers. Feudalism, while it may not be "primitive," is harmonized with a primitive, tribal system and uses its terminology. 623 [illegible] (62)

In civilized society, in contrast to primitive, membership is not bd to be based on descent but on residence and propery relations, and this form of society is represented by t state. This does not mean that the state does not use the primitive terminology, for, out of numerous exampl, one might remember the insistence of the National Socialist government of Germany prior to the second World war o "blood" and "race." Of greater importance, the state has a different system of economy, because, depending on its constitution, it defines its resources as its own, as the pensal property of its citizens, or both. The state in this case is not a newcomer to Iraq, inasmuch as some of the earliest examples known in history were developed there, b, at least for some centuries, it has been a stranger to Kurdistan. It has been seen how, in the Rowanduz area, it has taken a large part in the administration of life. Youths are recruited to the army, not to the following of a chieftain, and the military forces and the police have the task of regulating public order. Matters of civil and criminal law are decided in its courts, and the important matters of inheritance, marriage, and divorce require its authorization. Students may, if they are able, study in its schools and the sick can avail themselves of its medical facilities. Perhaps more importantly, it has insisted on the classification of land, buildings belonging

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It has had a new class added to its society, that of 693
the officials and officers, and, more than any agricultural 619
village, has been absorbed into an unfamiliar system. The
government elite of the town are on an equal footing, as [325]
far as prestige is concerned, with the local aristocracy
and enjoy the advantage of having the real power. Already 177
certain changes, which might have been anticipated, are 555
beginning to take place. A few merchants in the town have
adopted the European dress of the official class, and some
are determined that their sons, if humanly possible, will
be educated and take a higher place in the new hierarchy
of society, something previously impossible. It is in 177
Rowanduz, then, that a new social structure is being realized 619
as it is elsewhere, for example, among the Marsh Arabs
of the southern provinces. It is one of the state of
Iraq, rather than the tribal and feudal system which is
characterized by the absolute difference between aristocrat
and commoner. At present, the contest between the government
and the Kurdish nobility has only been partially
decided, but, barring some major event, it seems probable
that the Kurdish chieftains will be eliminated as a
distinctive class and be able to save themselves only as
landowners and participants in the new regime.

The relevance of the second object of this study to 121
ethnology is not that it has formulated something new or
unique, but that it supplements the large body of material
already gathered on the transition of primitive into

civilized society. For the ethnologist the Middle East presents an important but little-studied area in which the impact of European civilization on those that are older, as well as societies still primitive or feudal, may provide the scene for the most productive investigation. This study has attempted a primary description of life in Rowanduz and the definition of this collision, here represented by the Arabs rather than Europeans, with a little known Islamic culture. It is believed that the absorption of the community group into a new system of society in which advance is possible is one of the most significant trends taking place in many parts of the Middle East today. That European nationalism can climax some of these developments, which are quite different than, say, the reaction of the Egyptian state against British imperialism, is a matter which must be taken into account.

FATHER'S BROTHER'S DAUGHTER MARRIAGE IN KURDISTAN

FREDRIK BARTH

THE PREVALENCE of preferential father's brother's daughter marriage in the Middle East, and its association with Islam, has frequently received comment. Yet no clear picture of the possible structural implications of this form of preferential marriage has emerged, nor of the actual distribution and frequency of the practice. The present paper attempts to analyze the relationship between the Kurdish form of segmentary lineage organization and this marriage pattern.

Any chart of unilineal descent in a stable or expanding population constitutes a ramifying system where succeeding generations in many lines tend to be larger and more inclusive than the preceding. It is this chart, generally in compressed form, which is utilized to organize a descent group in the form of a segmentary lineage organization. This organizational form was named by Gifford and later by Firth, who called it a "ramage," and first analyzed fully by Evans-Pritchard.[1] Recent work on this type of organization has been lucidly summarized by Fortes.[2]

In almost all the lineage systems described in the literature, the lineage, or the clan of which it is a part, is an exogamous group. This fact of exogamy has important implications, e.g. for the development of dispersed clans and necessitating of a "daughter's son" relationship as a mechanism for grafting foreign lineages to the dominant lineage of an area (as described for the Nuer), and it is further frequently reflected in the whole construction of kinship terminology.[3]

Lineage exogamy is, however, no essential feature of lineage systems. No matter what the marriage pattern in a population may be, a strict chart of unilineal descent offers an equally clear framework on which a segmentary lineage organization may be based, and [illegible] tainly irrelevant to the political relations of segments and whole lineages—marriage patterns may, as it were, be "liberated" from their role in defining the relations between political groups. The lack of association of lineage organization and exogamy is common among Semitic and Iranian tribes of the Middle East,

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[1] E. W. Gifford, Miwok Lineages and the Political Unit in Aboriginal California (American Anthropologist, vol. 28, pp. 389-401, 1926); Raymond Firth, We, the Tikopia (London, 1936); E. E. Evans-Pritchard, The Nuer: Tribe and Clan (Sudan Notes and Records, 1933-1935), and The Nuer (London, 1940).

[2] Meyer Fortes, The Structure of Unilineal Descent Groups (American Anthropologist, vol. 55, pp. 17-41, 1953).

[3] F. Eggan, Social Organization of the Western Pueblos (Chicago, 1950).

Oct. 18, [illegible]

and in the same area possibly also among some Caucasian groups.[4] However, /21 though marriage patterns do not function to define the relations between lineages, this does not assume that marriage relations and connubial ties have lacked relevance of a structural or specifically political nature. The present paper presents an hypothesis regarding these implications in the Kurdish lineage organization, specifically the meaning of a pattern of father's brother's daughter marriage, for the consideration of students working with similar problems in the Middle East.

Features of Kurdish culture and society have been described elsewhere,[5] but /25 might be summarized briefly. The Kurds are a linguistic and ethnic group, nearly exclusively Moslem by religion, totalling some three million people.[6] They occupy a semi-continuous territory along the hills and mountains east and north of the Fertile Crescent, divided between the modern states of Persia, Iraq, Turkey, the U.S.S.R., and Syria. Some few groups of Kurds have remained nomadic till the present day, following their herds of sheep, goats, and large cattle into the mountains in the summer and down on the plains in the winter. The great majority are today subsistence farmers, many of whom practice a pattern of localized transhumance. The present discussion relates to the southern districts of Iraq Kurdistan, /16 where material was collected in the field from February to August, 1951.

Two basic types of organization were found: a tribal system, based on descent, /3 and a feudal system, based on class and land ownership. The latter is progressively /18 becoming assimilated into the modern structure of the state of Iraq; the former, a patrilineal lineage system, survives only among the nomads and a minority of the farmers in the more isolated territories.

Kurdish tribal organization is a segmentary lineage organization of very simple /15 type. The largest kinship unit, the *hoz*, is a maximal lineage, divisible into segments /19 according to the distance of patrilineal descent. The genealogical depth of the *hoz* varies. For the sedentary Hamawand (location: Kirkuk Liwa, Iraq), the /20 the nomadic [illegible] (location: wintering in Sulaimani Liwa, Iraq), twelve generations.

Several *hoz* may be united, though not necessarily, in a political confederacy /4.2 of variable endurance, the most important in southern Kurdistan being at present

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[4] Louis J. Luzbetak, *Marriage and the Family in Caucasia* (Vienna, 1951).

[5] V. F. Minorsky, "Kurds and Kurdistan" (in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, London, 1927); E. R. Leach, *Social and Economic Organization of the Rowanduz Kurds* (Monographs in Social Anthropology, no. 3, London, 1940); Fredrik Barth, *Principles of Social Organization in Southern Kurdistan* (Universitetets Etnografiske Museum, Bulletin no. 7, Oslo, 1953).

[6] *The Middle East* (Royal Institute of International Affairs, London, 1950).

462 the Jaf confederacy of nomadic as well as sedentary tribes. The following discussion will, for the sake of simplicity, relate only to the Hamawand, an independent tribe of population ca. 1500-2000, which became sedentary some two or three generations ago.

617 The lineage organization has two main areas of relevance: land ownership, and defense and offense in war. Property rights to land and grazing areas are held jointly by the tire as a whole; exclusive [illegible] rights are vested in the localized segments, inhabiting compact villages with a population of 50 to 200 individuals. Within the village territory, men have individual rights to certain fields. These rights are passed on from father to son, but are not inalienable, and land is freely redistributed by the village council when the need arises. If a segment becomes extinct, its territory passes as residual inheritance to the other segments of the lineage, according to the degree of kinship (on any one level of segmentation, "brothers" exclude "cousins" from inheritance).

Further, until successful pacification in 1922, the lineage was, and still is potentially, also a military unit, mobilized in war if a segment were attacked from without, and divided in opposition according to the segmentary charter when conflicts arose within the group. Conflicts relating to residential rights were rife, both within, where they led to fission, and without, where they led to conquest or loss of territory.

578 There is a clear contrast between the Kurdish and some African systems in the readiness with which the problems of fission and fusion are solved. A man's rights to land are limited to the territory of the village segment of his lineage; a stranger or a person from another lineage segment is accepted into a village only as hired farm help ("tenant") of degraded rank. The residential exclusiveness of lineage segments thus tends to be maintained to a high degree, and there are no kinship mechanisms for developing "attached" lineages with local residential and political rights.[7] The segmentary nature of the residential lineage segments itself directly in [illegible], inhabited nearly exclusively [illegible] of major and minor segments, [illegible] down to the village level, can be plotted on a map as clearly seen where [illegible] of the valley [illegible]. The main integrative factors relevant to segments larger [illegible] social contiguity, knowledge of common descent, and the importance of the tire as a defensive unit—this last probably being of most weight. No religious or ritual

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[7] A permanent relationship may occasionally be established between a conquering lineage group and a conquered, non-tribal peasant population, who retain certain rights to each of the ruling lineage. In these cases, a caste barrier is set up, preventing intermarriage between the two groups. This relationship, observed on the northern margin of Hamawand territory, does not seem to be very stable.

583 Where the cost of marrying an unrelated, "stranger" girl is so high and the normative preference for [illegible], the inducement for the young man to seek a bride among his cousins is evident. Consequently, the young men make the "right" choice though they appear subjectively to feel, and invariably express the opinion, that they are entirely free to seek any bride they might wish. The problem in this situation centres around what the motivation of the girl's father is, 591 that he should forgo his right to a brideprice which, to the Kurdish farmer, constitutes a major fortune. Or put somewhat differently, the central problem is: what are the advantages gained in this system by giving one's daughter to a [62] brother's son which compensates one for the loss of the brideprice.

613 579 631 665 656 572 The answer would seem to lie in the political structure. In the Kurdish lineage system, all groups are subject to a constant pressure towards segmentation and fission, counterbalanced by the interlocking circles of identification normally associated with segmentary descent systems (among the Nuer, territorial vs. descent groups; cross-cutting age-grades among Tallensi, further the ritual collaboration between lineages, etc.). The pressure is painfully evident in factional activity within the villages, and emerges in all first-hand descriptions of Kurdish life.[6] Kurdish villages are characterized by a constant struggle for political power on the part of a majority of the adult men, or [illegible] even women. Such political power is proportional to the number of followers one can mobilize to support one's claims. In a patrilineal lineage system, a man can expect political support only from his agnatic relatives, those who by descent belong to his political sub-section; and the factions in the village tend to be alignments of the younger men of a small lineage segment around an older leader. These segments consist primarily of brothers, sons, and brothers' sons. The relation to the latter is most critical: it crosses the first potential line of cleavage between collateral branches. If a man alienates his nephews by refusing them their traditional rights, he loses their political support. If he, on the other hand, gives them his daughters in marriage, the ties are reinforced and lineage solidarity maintained. The girl's father creates an obligation on the part of his brother's son to give him political support by exempting him from paying the [101] brideprice. No other man [illegible], in the lineage system, [illegible] political supporters; consequently they must invariably pay brideprice. The transaction may thus be regarded as constituting a case of delayed exchange: the father receives political allegiance in the future from his brother's son in return for the daughter [61] which he gives him. In this way, the pattern of preferential father's brother's

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[6] E.g., C. J. Rich, Narrative of a Residence in Koordistan (London, 1836); E. B. Soane, Through Mesopotamia and Kurdistan in Disguise (London, 1912); Hay, op. cit.

Barth = marriage serves to reinforce the political implications of the lineage system.

Jordan 1961

daughter marriage serve to reinforce the political implications of the lineage system.

If this view is generally correct, one would expect to find a high frequency of father's brother's daughter marriage associated with a developed lineage organization in the Middle East, and the frequencies to be appreciably lower in villages with a different type of organization. In the southern Kurdish area, this is clearly so; for other areas, the literature gives no conclusive evidence.

In the southern Kurdish feudally organized territory, neighbouring on the above discussed Hamawand territory, the comparative picture might be summarized as follows: (1) The segmented norms are modified, though not basically changed. Thus rights of parental consent are not so strongly emphasized, and the ideal of equality between spouses tends to be interpreted in terms of village endogamy rather than with reference to descent groups. (2) Brideprices tend to be lower for all categories of husbands, especially those of the local community (this holds true for the villages, not for the larger towns, where great variations in class and wealth intervene); some villages have made formal agreements that no brideprice should be charged within the village unit. An alternative and moderately popular way of avoiding brideprice is the sister exchange between two indifferently related men. (3) The actual frequency of father's brother's daughter marriage clearly drops, while village endogamy (in villages generally larger than those with a lineage organization) remains high. A complete census of marriages in one such feudal village may serve as an example:

[illegible]						
FaBrDa ([illegible])	MoBrDa ([illegible])	[illegible] ([illegible])	Other relatives	Unrelated, in village	Other village	Total
6	1	1	8	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]

This picture would seem to be consistent with the views expressed above.

Hilma Granqvist[20] gives some comparable material from an Arab village in Palestine, where the local community is divided into patrilineal descent groups, called clans, apparently of a segmentary type; but where several of these descent groups reside together in a large village, and have no visible political or territorial implications [illegible] spouses in one village.[21]

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[20] Hilma Granqvist, Marriage Conditions in a Palestinian Village (Helsingfors, 1931).

[21] Ibid., [illegible].

INTRODUCTION

In the spring and summer of 1957 the Danish Dokan Expedition was working under Professors Harald Ingholt and Jørgen Læssøe on the Rania plain west of Lesser Zab, a tributary of the Tigris in Iraqi Kurdistan. The Expedition concentrated on the excavation of the mound Tell Shemshara. Before the expedition left Denmark it offered to take with it a cultural anthropologist from the Ethnographical Department of the National Museum, who, based on the excavation camp on the right bank of the Lesser Zab, would have an opportunity to investigate Kurdish villages in the vicinity. The assistance of the Carlsberg Foundation enabled my association with the Danish Dokan Expedition. [14] [21]

Being a woman anthropologist, I was given, in addition to general investigations of Kurdish ethnography, the special task of studying women's cultural pattern, which in Muslim areas is difficult for male investigators to undertake.

The necessary female interpreter for such investigations was obtained through the former Kurdish Minister, Tawfiq Wahby, who at that time was living in Baghdad and was in touch with the Danish Chargé d'Affaires, P. Lysen, succeeded later in the summer of 1957 by F. de Jonquières. I left Denmark in May to join the expedition at the Dokan Dam Site, which is near the dam building over Lesser Zab, the *Anglo-French* engineering project in the Kurdish mountains started by the Iraq Development Board.

As it transpired that the neighbouring twin villages Tagaran-[illegible], from which the British and French engineers obtained some of their workmen, offered excellent possibilities for study, it was arranged through the Resident Engineer of the Dokan Dam Site, Mr. J. G. Campbell, that, while waiting for a woman interpreter, I should be taken as a paying guest in Sheikh [illegible] house in Tagaran as a member of the village owner's family.

In the course of three weeks, through the good offices of Tawfiq Wahby and the mayor of Sulaimani, the capital of the Liwa of Sulaimani, contact was gained with a young Kurdish woman school teacher, [illegible], who, accompanied by her 13 year old half-brother, agreed to go with me to the villages mentioned and stay with me in the sheikh's house as long as my work out there went on. When this had ended, supplemented by a visit to and stay in the [illegible] and Kurdish [illegible] village, [illegible], with trips over the mountains to Halabja and [illegible], my base of work was transferred to my interpreter's house in Sulaimani, a Kurdish provincial town. From here journeys [115]

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Black Sea
U. S. S. R.
Caspian Sea
TURKEY
SYRIA
IRAN (PERSIA)
Mediterranean Sea
SAUDI ARABIA
EGYPT
Persian Gulf

Map of the Middle East. The oblong panel includes the whole of the author's itinerary, which extended south of the Kurdish area to the alluvial plains around Baghdad.

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590
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were made into the area with stays at houses whose owners were related to my interpreter. In this way Halabja, Baikha and Tawella, near the Persian frontier, were visited. As transport the country's own resources were used; hired cars, primitive local lorries, mules and horses. If no private house was available we spent the nights at native Kurdish hotels. With the exceptions of the necessary visits to the Dokan Dam Site in order to store the objects it was my task to collect for the Ethnographical Department of the National Museum, and to contact the member of the Danish Dokan Expedition, who every fortnight came in from the excavation camp with the Land Rover for provisions, and a single visit to the excavation site at Tell Shemshara, I lived all the time I was in the country (5th May–5th Sept.) among the Kurds.

It became necessary that I should visit Baghdad at the beginning of August in connection with the forwarding of my collection. As the expedition was dissolved in the middle of that month, I travelled back alone via Kirkuk to Sulaimani. Here I stayed another month, paid a further visit to Tuy[illegible] [illegible] with my interpreter and her brother to [illegible], making a lengthy trip to Rowanduz via Kirkuk, Mosul and Erbil in order to determine some costume variants. When I was to leave Sulaimani my interpreter and an older brother accompanied me to Baghdad where I was given the opportunity of living with Kurds in an Arab town.

IRAQ
IRAN
(PERSIA)

Local map of the area visited. The area is covered by R.A.F.'s aeronautical maps Nos. 348, 427 and 428.

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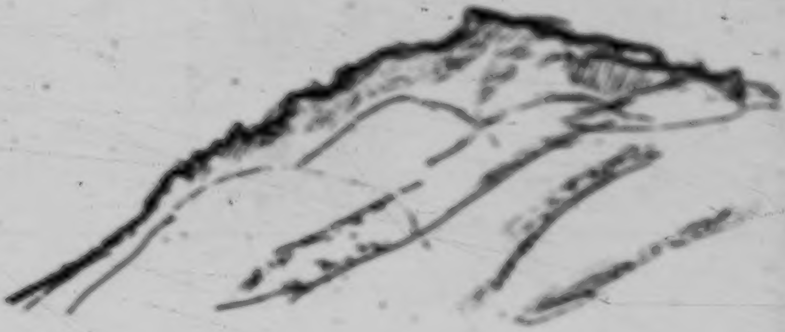
Thus during my approx. four months stay in Iraqi Kurdistan I did not, as planned, stay among 114
Europeans at the Danish Dokan Expedition's camp with daily, but isolated visits to Kurdish villages, 121
but lived almost uninterruptedly in Kurdish homes. This greatly facilitated the work of the woman
interpreter, who would hardly have secured her family's permission to live permanently in an European [115]
excavation camp among foreign men even though another woman was present. In addition to the
opportunity to follow the life of the village, I also had the chance to study life in an urban environment.
In addition, my interpreter, besides being of invaluable assistance in my work of investigating the lives

114 of the other women, was also an intelligent representative of the then commencing transformation of
12 the Kurdish woman's life pattern, doubly manifest, as in her home at Sulaimani there was, in addition
15 to sisters who represented the same development, a group of elderly women that constituted the background on which this change is taking place.



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THE FUNCTION OF THE DWELLING

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[illegible]

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WOMAN'S POSITION IN THE COMMUNITY

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manipulating these various systems and principles. These competing factions, manipulating the familiar (but in part mutually exclusive) systems, will establish different power hierarchies in different villages, resulting in the present variety of forms of social organization found in the area.

However, one type of basic organization may be said to be distinctively Kurdish. This is usually called *tribal*, and is based on the lineage principle. Any movement away from this basic framework of organization will be the result of the above type of manipulations, and may be seen as a step in a de-tribalization process. A special attempt will be made to explore the structure of the tribal group, and its reactions to the pressures that tend to lead to its breakdown.

Certain characteristics of the lineage system in its Kurdish application might profitably be treated immediately, to avoid confusion. The Kurds practice close family endogamy with preferential FaBrDa marriage, and a Kurdish descent group shows many consequent characteristics, among which is a tendency towards constant branching and the establishment of new, independent endogamous subsections. The concept of a lineage, as developed for other areas, normally applies to an exogamous grouping. However, the main importance of the lineage concept is in the field of political organization, and it will be seen that the political functions of the Kurdish descent groups and the African lineage groups are essentially similar. This might be expected, if only from the following consideration: Women in Kurdish society are normally of minimal political importance, and matrilineal descent has no political significance. The strictly patrilineal descent group will be unmodified by any pattern of preferential marriage. Since this, in Kurdish society, is the politically significant group, the fact of endogamy has no direct political importance. I have therefore chosen to call this patrilineal descent group a lineage when politically recognized.

After an orientation on some features which are uniform over the whole South Kurdish area, notably in the field of subsistence and kinship, the formal lineage organization will be discussed, as well as the basic pattern of non-tribal formal organization; and the fundamental composition of the resulting local groups will be treated.

However, the formal political organization gives only a partial picture of the actual power hierarchy and organization in the village, and the remainder of the paper will attempt to show how this power hierarchy emerges, and what the characteristics of the resulting types of social organization are.

By way of introduction, the ethnic position and history of the Kurds should be sketched briefly. The great majority of Kurds are today, and have been for some time, settled or transhumant [illegible] cereal agriculturalists and stock breeders; some tribes are still purely pastoral nomads of what has been called the mountainside, Persian type. The Kurds inhabit the mountainous country stretching from the Euphrates in northern Syria and Turkey to Kermanshah in Persia; the backbone of this country is formed by the Zagros mountains. Towards the Mesopotamian plain they extend roughly through the foothill zone; to the North and East, Kurdish territory blends into that of Armenia and Azerbaijan. In much of that area, Kurds make up only a minority of the total population. Southern Kurdistan is, on the other hand, almost exclusively inhabited by Kurds. (cf. Map No. 1.)

The population density in most Kurdish territory is very low, the characteristic settlement pattern is in small, compact villages of 10 to 300 inhabitants, widely scattered over the area. The Kurds today are estimated to number some 3 million (The Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1951), but of that figure a great number are urbanized or turkicized, and Kurds by descent only.

The Kurdish language belongs to the Indo-European stock and shows great similarity to Persian, but also archaic features that suggest a process of parallel development and borrowing rather than recent splitting. Literary efforts in Kurdish have been only sporadic. Historical records seem to accord Kurds as an ethnic group considerable antiquity in the area (Minorsky, 1927), assuming them to be the Carduchi who harried the retreat of Xenophon's 10 000 (401—400 B.C.). Early converted to Islam, independent Kurd principalities attained some degree of organization only after the fall of the Abbasid Caliphate, but generally played a minor role (except in producing Sultan Saladin at the time of the 3rd Crusade). A major part of

[graf continues on p. [illegible]]

8: Leach E-5 (1938) 1940 MA11 Kurd MA11
Rowanduz

CHAPTER I

Introductory

The following account is based upon a five weeks field survey carried out during the summer of 1938. It was intended to follow this up with an intensive study of one locality over a period of twelve months. Political developments in Europe made this project impracticable at the time and the scheme has now been abandoned.

For the facilities afforded me in Iraq I am particularly indebted to Mr.C.J.Edmonds, Adviser to the Iraq Government, Captain Vyvyan Holt, Oriental Secretary at the British Embassy Baghdad, and His Excellency Ahmed Beg i Taufiq Beg, Mutasarrif of Erbil, in whose province this research was carried out.

The justification for publishing the somewhat superficial data contained in this monograph lies in the absence of any strictly comparable material elsewhere. The general form of Kurdish social organisation as here described is probably fairly typical of that of a large number of Mohammedan peoples scattered throughout the mountainous areas of western Asia. Concerning such peoples there is at present available very little ethnographic material of any kind and the particular that the Kurdish form of society is typical is put forward as an hypothesis open to correction in the light of further study.

Of more immediate relevance is the close correlation that undoubtedly exists between Kurdish social forms and those of Arabia in general. This fact is of interest since linguistically the Kurds are of "Aryan" rather than "Semitic" stock. Concerning the "manners and customs" of various Bedouin and Semitic groups there is of course an enormous mass of literature available, some of it of the highest scientific quality, but the emphasis in every case has been to make an historical record of ethnographic fact rather than to study any particular group as a society in functioning existence at the present time. The work of Jaussen, Musil, Lane, Drower and Murray to name but a few, though admirably detailed, is by modern standards somewhat lifeless, since it describes the pattern of various cultural norms without, as a rule, showing their social significance or demonstrating the fundamental interrelationship between them. The earlier studies of Robertson-Smith, Frazer and Wellhausen were entirely synthetic in character and gave no true picture of the functioning of any single

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* A. Jaussen = Les Coutumes des Arabes au Pays de Moab
A. Musil = Manners and Customs of the Rwala Bedouins
E.W.Lane = Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians
E.S.Drower = The Mandaeans of Iraq and Iran
G.W.Murray = Sons of Ishmael

8: Leach E-5 (1938) 1940 MA11 Kurd MA11
Rowanduz

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